

The “Make It In America” Plan: **A Review of the Past Five Years and a Look at What's Next**

Five years ago, House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer and House Democrats created the Make It In America plan to encourage private sector job creation here in the U.S. During the 114th Congress, Whip Hoyer and House Democrats are hosting a series of hearings entitled “Make It In America: What’s Next?” Designed to explore how the economy has, and hasn’t, changed over the past five years, and what families and businesses need to succeed in today’s economy, the “Make It In America: What’s Next?” series will hear from Members of Congress, innovators, entrepreneurs, economists, and others about how the Make It In America plan needs to be updated to address today’s challenges and take advantage of new opportunities. Take a look at an overview of the last five years of the Make It In America plan and a preview of what’s next:

Make It In America Over the Past Five Years

Launched on July 22, 2010, the Make It In America jobs plan was created when the U.S. economy was recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

- The unemployment rate was 9.4 percent, having more than doubled since the recession began in 2007. [[BLS](#)]
- Of those unemployed, nearly half – 45% – had gone without work for more than 6 months. [[BLS](#)]
- The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at 10,322 – still down more than a quarter from its prerecession high. [Yahoo Finance, [7/22/10](#)]
- Credit card delinquencies were peaking, with more than 13% of card balances over 90 days overdue. [[New York Fed](#)]

The Make It In America plan was centered on the goal of creating the best conditions for American businesses to manufacture their products, innovate, and create jobs right here at home. Each Congress, the Make It In America plan has been updated with new legislation and ideas to strengthen the economy.

Since 2010, [sixteen Make It In America bills have been signed into law](#), including legislation to cut taxes and provide loans for small businesses, speed up the patent process, train skilled workers, and end tax loopholes that encourage companies to ship jobs overseas.

A Look at Make It In America: What’s Next?

Today, the economy is very different than it was in 2010. A key part of the “Make It In America: What’s Next?” hearing series is to discuss bright spots in the economy and how to build on those successes, and to look at the new challenges facing the economy and explore ways to address them.

Signs of Recovery:

- The unemployment rate is 5 percent – the lowest point since April 2008. [[BLS](#)]
 - October 2015 marked the sixty-eighth consecutive month of private-sector job growth.
 - 2014 was America's best year of job growth since 1999.
- The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at 17,863 on November 5, 2015, which represents a 73 percent increase from when the Make It In America plan was launched in 2010. [Yahoo Finance, [11/5/15](#)]

New Challenges:

- The benefits of recovery have not been felt equally. For example:
 - The unemployment rate for African Americans remains at 9.5%, near the level the broader population experienced during the worst of the recession. [[BLS](#)]
 - New business startups, booming in parts of the West and Southwest, have lagged in many Northern and Midwestern cities. [[Kauffman Foundation](#)]

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- Real wages fell sharply during the recession, and for at least 70% of the workforce wages have yet to return to pre-recession levels. [\[EPI\]](#)

The “Make It In America: What’s Next?” hearing series started with a Member Day on July 9, where [twenty-one House Democrats testified](#) and shared their thoughts on how we can best address the new economic challenges we face since the Make It In America plan first launched, as well as introduce new ideas that can help keep our economy competitive. House Democrats participated in four separate panels addressing important topics: American Innovation, Skills Training for the Future, The Future of Manufacturing, and “Making It” Across the Economy. They shared the following ideas on ways to update the Make It In America plan to ensure that families and businesses across the country have what they need to get ahead:

- **Support Fab labs**: A set of digitally controlled machine tools, including 3D printers, laser cutters, routers, and computer-aided design tool, that enable participants to build just about anything
- **Develop Maker spaces**: Communal work spaces that operate on a gym membership type business model and provide members with access to millions of dollars’ worth of advanced manufacturing equipment
- **Harness job opportunities created by Internet of Things**: A concept of connecting any device with an on and off switch to the Internet
- **Examine economic opportunities generated by the Sharing Economy**: Collaboration using 21st century technology to exchange information, sell goods and services, use equipment, find spaces for innovation, and develop capital
- **Promote STEAM education**: STEAM education that incorporates arts to prepare workers who have advanced technical skills as well as an aptitude for problem solving and creative thinking
- **Expand needed career training to address skills shortages**: Support and expand efforts to provide needed skills training to meet the needs of employers in today's economy
- **Focus on the “suburban office economy”**: The middle class Americans who work for businesses in which their own economic success is linked to that of their employer
- **Assist small agriculture**: Help young farmers access land to farm, partner with organizations to provide beginning farmers with the training they need, and invest in developing local food infrastructure

During the [second “Make It In America: What’s Next?” hearing](#), House Democrats heard from outside experts, who are leaders in the fields of entrepreneurship, information technology, workforce development, and other areas critical to our long-term economic competitiveness. They addressed issues that were raised by Members who participated in the first hearing, including entrepreneurship, the sharing economy, crowdfunding, and skills training. A total of eight outside experts participated in four panels: The American Economy Today, New Economic Sectors, Skills Training & Manufacturing, and Innovation Today, where they discussed the following ideas:

- **Change the way a successful economy is measured**: To create family-sustaining jobs, the economy must grow, create more wealth, improve living standards for people, and be more inclusive
- **Acknowledge and respond to changing workforce demographics**: As U.S. workers retire, they will be replaced with a majority minority workforce that needs training to succeed in a technology-savvy, global economy
- **Rebrand manufacturing**: Rather than the dark, dirty, dangerous, and declining industries of the past, today’s industries are technology-driven, globally relevant, and produce well-paying jobs accessible to workers without a college degree
- **Pursue government funded-research**: U.S. research and development investments are lagging behind competitors; additional investments in data and technology are needed drive innovation
- **Support crowdfunding**: Using the internet to connect large numbers of small investors with innovative startups has been an effective way to help get them off the ground

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- **Address the challenges of the “fissured workplace”:** The direct employer-employee relationship is evolving into a network of contractors, subcontractors, or franchisees, creating new challenges as workers become detached from lead companies
- **Use technology to connect workers and employers:** The U.S. labor market needs a better system that links employers, educators, workers and job seekers to develop training, recognize overlooked potential workers, and respond to labor market needs

Democrats hosted the [third “Make It In America: What’s Next?” hearing](#) on October 28. Eighteen House Democrats testified over the course of four panels, titled Rebuilding America’s Promise, Making Government Work Better, American Innovation, and The Future of American Manufacturing & Skills Training. They shared the following ideas on additional ways to revamp the Make It In America plan to ensure it reflects today’s economic landscape:

- **Expand skills training at community colleges and apprenticeship opportunities:** Community and technical colleges and career and tech centers play an important role in supporting skills training, and enhancing their ability to offer classes that fit into the schedule of a full-time employee can be a true catalyst for workforce development. Obtaining strong buy-in from local businesses and trade unions to accommodate and expand apprenticeships provides valuable hands-on learning opportunities
- **Making government work better:** The economy can’t perform at its peak if government isn’t working. Making government more effective and transparent must be a priority. This can be done by utilizing new technologies like data analytics to root out waste, fraud, and abuse and deliver better services to constituents, and also by pursuing efforts to address redistricting and campaign finance reform so that everyone has an equal opportunity to make their voice heard in our democracy.
- **Invest in research and development:** To ensure American companies maintain the capacity to develop new and innovative products, strategic investments in research in technology and advanced manufacturing techniques are needed.
- **Rebuild infrastructure:** Infrastructure repair has both a direct construction job benefit and also supports commerce, travel and other economic activity. Congress can help by promoting investments in updated housing and community redevelopment, and highway, bridge, transit and water infrastructure.
- **Consider broader regional approaches to economic development:** A number of communities are working regionally to focus attention and investment on economic sectors that demonstrate competitive advantages in the marketplace. Public-private approaches to development can enhance the ability of communities to leverage federal economic development funds and allow them to focus not only on attracting individual investments one at a time, but also on transforming themselves into globally competitive economic hubs.
- **Assist Working Families:** Congress can help give hardworking American families a chance to get ahead by securing equal pay for equal work, raising the minimum wage, providing paid sick and family leave, and protecting against workplace discrimination.

In total, 77 House Democrats have participated in the first three “Make It In America: What’s Next?” hearings, and, over the next few months, we will continue to hear from more individuals on what families and businesses need to Make It In America today.